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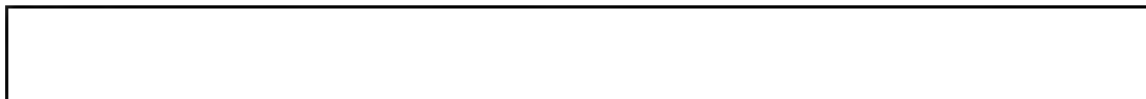
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Pakistan: The President has moved toward civilian rule. (Page 8)

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Pakistan: President Yahya may have taken the first move toward a political compromise which could hasten civilian rule.

Yahya has assigned Vice Admiral S.M. Ahsan, governor-designate of East Pakistan, to begin negotiating a constitutional compromise acceptable to East and West Pakistan and to the martial law regime. Ahsan told US officials in Karachi that Yahya believes an agreement with East Pakistan's most popular political leader, Mujibur Rahman, is the key to early elections and a return to civilian rule.

President Yahya purportedly wants to accelerate the election timetable and is willing to "guarantee" Mujib the prime ministership if the latter will agree to a strong central government and a presidency with limited powers. Ahsan stressed that the problem of proportional representation of East and West Pakistan in the national legislature could be worked out, but that the West Pakistani establishment could not accept Mujib's concept of extensive provincial autonomy and an impotent center.

Ahsan hopes to convince Mujib to respond constructively and will argue that a compromise with the government "may well be the last tenuous hope of holding this country together." If Mujib feels that he has the regime on the run, or if he is afraid that a deal with Rawalpindi will diminish his East Pakistani support significantly, he could drive a hard bargain. If his opportunism prevails, however, he might accept the attractive offer of guaranteed political power. Ahsan has ventured no predictions that his mission will succeed and he has given no indication of the approach to be taken if it fails.

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